

Who Are Your Partners?

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Making sure that all residents of a community are prepared for emergencies takes a lot of work. As public health professionals, we know all too well that we can't do it alone. The ability to partner effectively with other organizations is absolutely essential.

However, in putting together a program for home care providers, the partners are not always obvious. They may be organizations and agencies you don't work with on a regular basis. It requires some research to identify them. And once they have been identified, the organizations may not be readily inclined to work with an unfamiliar partner such as public health.

Further complicating matters, home care agencies often operate on the thinnest of profit margins. Their staffs may be so stretched in terms of time and budget that the idea of adding another meeting or task to their agenda might seem daunting, if not impossible.

When planning your event for home care providers, it is crucial to include some of them in the planning from the earliest stages. Not only will their inclusion in the planning process facilitate a more inclusive program, but having access to their resources—both human and material—will help you achieve a successful event.

But how can you identify the right partners? And how will you encourage their participation without overwhelming them with additional work?

Begin by brainstorming with your planning committee.

Who are the likely partners? What resources can they bring?

If you are unsure about whom to partner with, conduct an online or phone directory search of the home care agencies in your area. Your state home care association is one place to start. To find your state home care association, visit the website for the National Association for Home Care and Hospice (NAHC), www.nahc.org, and click on your state on the NAHC Directory of State Associations map to find the name and contact information. In addition, your local government might also have a list of these agencies, as many require licensure and regulation.

In addition to the private partners, think about other governmental agencies that might want to partner with you. State level agencies serving vulnerable populations are also a good resource.

Once you have identified potential partners, don't be afraid to ask. Often, when trying to establish a partnership, it is simply a matter of assigning the proper roles and responsibilities. People generally are willing to cooperate if the task is within their scope of work.

